

**May 11, 2006**

**New Study Reveals 14% of Teens Have Had Face-to-Face Meetings with People They've Met on the Internet**

*Children's Advocate John Walsh, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and Cox Communications Announce Results of Teen Internet Survey and Tools to Help Parents and Guardians Take Charge of Web Use in the Home*

ATLANTA – New research by Cox Communications in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) reveals teens are engaging in risky behavior online but that parents and guardians can have an impact on that behavior. One-third of teens surveyed say they are considering meeting face-to-face with someone they've met from the Internet and 14% say they've already had such an encounter. While many teens are sharing personal information online and putting themselves in potentially harmful situations, the survey results show that when parents and guardians talk to their teens about Internet safety, their exposure to potential threats decline and they make safer online decisions.

**Key findings:**

Teen Internet use and attitudes about safety present potential risks, but they also reveal opportunities for education and highlight a critical role for watchful parents and guardians:

**Teens continue to be active online but some still engage in risky behavior:**

- Teens have established a significant presence on social networking web sites:
  - 61% of 13- to 17-year-olds have a personal profile on sites such as MySpace, Friendster, or Xanga. Half have posted pictures of themselves online.
  - Older teens (16- to 17-year-olds) and girls represent the majority of youths who use the Internet for social interaction, meeting friends, and networking.
- However, many have also been exposed to the accompanying potential risks.
  - 14% have actually met face-to-face with a person they had known only through the Internet (9% of 13- to 15-year-olds and 22% of 16- to 17-year-olds).
  - 30% have considered meeting someone they've only communicated with online.
  - 71% reported receiving messages online from someone they don't know.
  - 45% have been asked for personal information by someone they don't know.
- When teens receive messages online from someone they don't know, 40% usually reply to and chat with that person.
  - Only 18% said they tell a parent or guardian that they received a message from someone they don't know.

**Many teens consider their online behavior to be safe**

- One out of five teens reported that it is safe (i.e. "somewhat" or "very safe") to share personal information on a public blog or networking site.
- As well, 37% of 13- to 17-year-olds said they're "not very concerned" or "not at all concerned" about someone using personal information they've posted online in ways they haven't approved.

**Parents and guardians can impact their teen's online experience through communication:**

- 33% of 13- to 17-year-olds reported that their parents or guardians know "very little" or "nothing" about what they do on the Internet.



- 48% of 16- to 17-year-olds said their parents or guardians know “very little” or “nothing” about their online activities.
- Fully 22% of those surveyed reported their parents or guardians have never discussed Internet safety with them.
- On the other hand, 36% of youth—girls and younger teens, most notably—said their parents or guardians have talked to them “a lot” about online safety, and 70% said their parents or guardians have discussed the subject with them during the past year.
- Fewer teens whose parents and guardians have talked to them “a lot” about online safety have an instant messaging (IM) name or pictures of themselves on the Internet, compared to kids whose parents or guardians haven’t talked to them at all. More teens who’ve talked to parents or guardians ignore messages from unfamiliar people, refuse to reply or chat, block unknown senders, and report these occurrences to trusted adults.

The national teen Internet survey was funded by Cox Communications in partnership with NCMEC and was conducted among 1,160 teens age 13 to 17 during March 2006. The research was conducted by Teen Research Unlimited (TRU).

To help promote awareness of the tools and software parents and guardians can easily access to better protect their children online, John Walsh, children's advocate and host of "America's Most Wanted," will appear live in local broadcast television and radio interviews across the country on May 11. As a continuation of the research findings, Cox Communications and Walsh will host a Teen Summit on Internet Safety June 21 in Washington DC at the National Press Club. Teen participants will discuss Internet safety and ways parents and guardians can better communicate with their children about being safer online. The Summit will air on Cox Cable channels nationwide in July.

The media effort by Walsh, NCMEC, and Cox is part of a larger campaign to encourage parents and guardians to become more involved with their children's online habits and behaviors, and to demonstrate how families can get the most out of their Internet experiences—safely. Launched in partnership with Walsh in 2004, "Take Charge! Smart Choices for Your Cox Digital Home" hopes to increase awareness and use of parental controls and Internet filtering tools already available in Internet and cable customers' homes. A major component of Take Charge! is NetSmartz®, an interactive, educational safety resource from NCMEC and Boys & Girls Clubs of America that uses age-appropriate 3-D activities to teach children and teens how to stay safer on the Internet.

"We all know that the Internet is a fantastic educational tool for children," said Walsh. "However, parents need to be engaged with their children and aware of their online habits to prevent the unthinkable from happening. NetSmartz.org and Cox's Take Charge! web site are great places for parents to learn how they can take charge of their family's web usage."

Complete survey results, online safety tools and tips, links to NCMEC, NetSmartz, and the CyberTipline, and a glossary of common Internet chat lingo are at [www.cox.com/TakeCharge](http://www.cox.com/TakeCharge). The comprehensive Take Charge! site includes a free parents' guide to help parents and guardians make good choices about content available on TV and the Internet, Public Service Announcements featuring Walsh, and local educational activities within the communities Cox serves. Teaching young children and teens how to stay safer online is a major element of the program thanks to Cox's partnership with NetSmartz. In addition to Take Charge! PSAs, Cox Communications has donated more than \$25 million worth of advertising time to NetSmartz and NCMEC to encourage children to be safer online.



## About the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

NCMEC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCMEC's congressionally mandated CyberTipline, a reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation, has handled more than 387,800 leads. Since its establishment in 1984, NCMEC has assisted law enforcement with more than 119,800 missing child cases, resulting in the recovery of more than 102,200 children. For more information about NCMEC, call its toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST or visit its web site at [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com).

## About Cox Communications ([www.cox.com](http://www.cox.com))

Cox Communications, a Fortune 500 company, is a multi-service broadband communications and entertainment company with more than 6.7 million total customers. Cox is the nation's third-largest cable television provider and offers an array of advanced digital video, high-speed Internet and telephony services over its own nationwide IP network. Cox Communications is a full-service, facilities-based provider of communications solutions for commercial customers, providing high-speed Internet, voice and long-distance services, as well as data and video transport services for small to large-sized businesses via Cox Business Services. Cox Media offers national and local cable advertising in traditional spot and new media formats, along with promotional opportunities and production services. More information about the services of Cox Communications, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises, is available at [www.cox.com](http://www.cox.com), [www.coxbusiness.com](http://www.coxbusiness.com), and [www.coxmedia.com](http://www.coxmedia.com).

### Media Contact:

Cox Communications

David Grabert

404-269-7054

[David.Grabert@Cox.com](mailto:David.Grabert@Cox.com)

Cox Communications

Stephanie Davis

404-843-7872

[Stephanie.Davis@Cox.com](mailto:Stephanie.Davis@Cox.com)